

VZCZCXRO3658

PP RUEHBZ RUEHDU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHPA RUEHRN

DE RUEHMR #0183 0821206

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 231206Z MAR 07

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2809

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 3160

UNCLAS MASERU 000183

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM ZI LT

SUBJECT: SADC DOUBLE TROIKA PRESS RELEASE: MASERU - MARCH 22, 2007

REF: MASERU 177; MASERU 160 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. On March 22, Embassy Maseru received a diplomatic note from Lesotho's Ministry of Foreign Affairs extending an invitation to all Diplomatic Missions in Maseru to send representatives to attend a media briefing by Timothy Thahane, the Lesotho Minister of Finance and Development Planning, who is also the Chairman of Southern African Development Community (SADC) Council of Ministers. The note indicated that the briefing was meant to inform members of the Diplomatic Corps and media houses about the Council proceedings, since the sessions had been held behind closed doors.

¶2. The press release by Minister Thahane reads as follows:

BEGIN TEXT:

Taking advantage of the SADC Council of Ministers Meeting in Maseru on March 22, the SADC Double Troika met to consider the economic, political and security situation in Southern Africa. They:

-- Recognized the initiative which the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security, H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania took to visit the Republic of Zimbabwe for briefing and consultation on recent developments there.

-- Reviewed the reports by local and international media and statements by various capitals regarding the situation in the SADC region.

In view of these, the SADC Double Troika underscored the importance of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security intensifying its consultations on the political and economic challenges confronting the region.

END TEXT.

¶3. The Minister did not state what had transpired during President Kikwete's trip to Zimbabwe, but noted that the press briefing had commenced late due to discussions amongst ministers on the trip. Note: The SADC Troika is composed of Botswana (out-going Chair), Lesotho (Chair) and Zambia (in-coming Chair). The SADC Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security has Namibia (in-coming Chair), Tanzania (Chair) and Angola (out-going Chair).

PERRY